

# NORTHWOODS JOURNAL – MAY 2020

## SPECIAL SPRINGTIME EDITION

*A Free Publication about Enjoying and Protecting Marinette County's Outdoor Life*

### In This Issue:

Get Outside this Spring – Activities & Ideas for Families & Kids	1
How Wildlife Socially Distances	2
Spring Garden Ideas & Activities	3
More Family Nature Activities	4
Go on a Bug Hunt!	5
Pollinator Invitation Gardens - Project "P.I.G."	6
Make a Miniature Play Garden	7
Make Your Own Birdbath	8
DIY Painted Garden Markers	8
Using Tech to Learn in Nature	9
Citizen Science – Journey North	10
EEK! Environmental Education for Kids in Wisconsin	10



### New in 2020 - Pollinator Invitation Gardens - the P.I.G. Project!



Do you want to put in a small pollinator garden this spring at your home or business? With everyone having a little spare time due to COVID, putting in a garden space for beneficial insects is a great way to get outside and learn about habitats! **See page 6 for more information** about this project!



Pollinator garden at Crivitz Elementary in Sept. 2019, installed in July 2019, with native plants like Columbine, Wild Bergamot, Butterflyweed, Beebalm, Black-eyed Susan, Smooth and New England Asters.

### Get Outside this Spring! Fun Activities and Ideas for Exploring the Out-of-Doors for Kids & Families

Many of us are feeling cooped up these days, and the pull of warmer weather, longer days, and more free time on our hands than usual may leave you wondering how to stay busy – especially if you have kids. Here are some ideas to help keep everyone busy – while at the same time getting outside into nature and the outdoors – and away from too much TV, smartphone, or computer screen time.



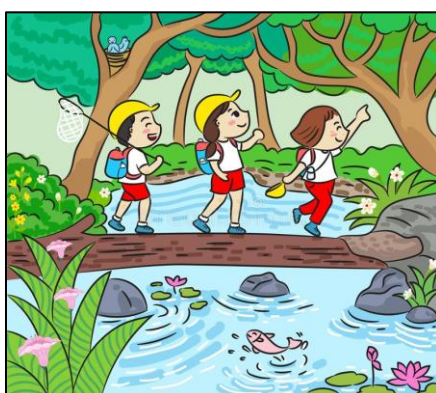
#### Studying Nature

Start by encouraging your child to notice the nature around them. When you're at your local park or forest, introduce questions like, "How old do you think that tree is?" With your child, practice sitting in one spot and observing what you can see in front of you. You can start small with just three or four minutes of study.

After they've become more comfortable with observation, encourage them to write down what they observe in a journal. Find a topic they're interested in (trees, flowers, insects, etc.). Go to the library and let them choose interesting books on the subject or help them do research online. Find an experiment that can help them further engage with the topic. Sites like Pinterest have great ideas for easy experiments. (Example of an activity from <https://discovertheforest.org/activities>).

#### 23 Things Kids Can Do Outside

- 1) Put one foot quietly in front of the other and walk like a fox. How close can you get to a squirrel or rabbit?
- 2) Observe birds and imitate their movements. How do different birds move?



- 3) Walk out your front door. How many shades of green can you see?

- 4) Serenade a spider. "The itsy-bitsy spider..." How many different kinds of webs can you find? Draw your own web.



- 5) Look for animal signs: tracks, poop, feathers, matted down patches of grass, nibbled plants, scratches in tree bark...
- 6) Make a crayon rubbing of a leaf or the bark of a tree.
- 7) Gather up a variety of interesting rocks. Spray with water to make the colors stand out. Investigate why rocks have colors. Tap them together and make rock music!
- 8) Start a nature journal or an art book.
- 9) Set out seeds for birds and watch to see who comes!
- 10) Make wind chimes out of materials you find on the ground (a stick and shells, for instance).
- 11) Collect the smells along your path. Can you catch a smell? Borrow different things (like pond water, earth, a flower) to put in jars. Close your eyes – can you tell what you're smelling?
- 12) Slither like a snake, or tuck like a turtle!

*Continued next page*

### **\*\* NEWSFLASH! \*\***

Due to COVID safety concerns, *the Northwoods Journal* will not be delivered in print form this summer as usual throughout Marinette County. Instead, each issue will be available online in PDF color format at <https://www.marinettecounty.com/departments/land-information/environmental-education/northwoods-journal/>. There is a link to new as well as old issues since 2005 (*the May 2020 edition is a bonus issue*). It will also be on Facebook at "Marinette County Land Information Department".

We can also print a copy and mail it to your address. Please call 715-732-7780 for a mailing request, or email [abartels@marinettecounty.com](mailto:abartels@marinettecounty.com).




## How Wildlife Socially Distances


<https://www.fws.gov/news/blog/index.cfm/2020/4/20/Be-Like-Wildlife-and-Practice-Social-Distancing>

Social distancing may be new (and uncomfortable) to people, but for many wildlife species, social distancing is a way of life. A talented member of our staff has been creating PSAs to encourage social distancing during these trying times.


This is an **ERMINE**.  
Ermine like to live **ALONE**. They live in **UNDERGROUND** burrows. Their territories can be as large as **49 ACRES**. Be like the ermine and **PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING**  
Just don't go around immobilizing prey with your mouth. That would be super weird.



This is a **RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD**. They are highly **TERRITORIAL**. Even while migrating they keep their **SPACE**. They can nest up to **30 feet** off the ground. Be like the rufous hummingbird and **PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING**  
We get you're bored, but maybe don't try to recreate display flights off your couch.



This is a **NORTHERN PIKE**. Northern pike are **SOLITARY**. They love staying within their **TERRITORY**. They live underwater from 0 to **100 FEET** deep. Be like the northern pike and **PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING**  
Maybe don't ambush hunt your neighbors. You really don't need milk that badly.



## Get Outside, continued

13) Snoop around flowers and plants to see what insects you can find.

14) Roll over a log to discover what's under it (remember to put it back when you're done).



15) Collect a bunch of different fallen leaves in a bag. Then empty out the bag and try to match the leaves.

16) Think about how people stay warm in winter, then investigate how animals do it.

17) Try to identify some trees without leaves.

18) Look for soils of different textures and colors.

19) Lie down and look at the clouds.

20) Keep phenology records (dates of bird sightings, first blooms, trees turning color, etc.).

21) Take a hike through your neighborhood or yard and try to find something that is one of the colors of the rainbow. Look to find something that matches all the colors: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet.

22) Learn the calls of three common birds in your neighborhood. Use apps or go online to help you learn the names and calls of the birds, and dazzle your friends when you name a bird by its sound. Try to find the bird to check your answer.



23) Walk through your neighborhood or nearby park and write down all the different things you can smell, such as fresh cut grass, moist soil, flowers, and rain. Can you smell different things at different times of the day? When do you smell the most things? Do you think the types of smells change during other seasons? (From <https://www.naturenet.org/resources-for-families/things-kids-can-do-outside/>; see also <https://www.naturenet.org/connecting-to-nature-during-covid-19/>).

## Build a Bug Hotel

Create a resting spot for bugs! Use a cardboard wine delivery box with built-in dividers, or any sturdy cardboard box, like fruit boxes from your local supermarket. You could even use an old archive storage box or moving boxes. If you want to make something more weatherproof, you can find wooden fruit boxes or crates online.



Your box may have built-in dividers, or you can make your own. Cut three or four lengths to fit the height and width of your hotel, and then cut slots in each piece at regular intervals to

connect. To finish the bug hotel, use items like old house bricks, old pots, cardboard rolls, grass clippings, sticks, tree branches, and leaf litter. It offers an excellent opportunity to discuss how bugs use different materials, and which elements might attract which kinds of insects. You'll be surprised at what you have on hand (From <https://www.natureplaywa.org.au/diy-bug-hotel-no-construction-required>).

See also:

- <https://www.firefliesandmudpies.com/bug-hotel/>
- <https://mothernatured.com/animal-craft-ideas/bug-hotel-for-kids/>
- <https://pollinators.msu.edu/publications/building-and-managing-bee-hotels-for-wild-bees/>
- <https://www.almanac.com/content/bee-houses-solitary-bees#>

## Play Nature Games

Here are a couple creative nature games to awaken interest in the outdoors (from [www.sharingnature.com](http://www.sharingnature.com)).

*"Meet a Tree"* – To play, divide the group into pairs and have one of each pair wear a blindfold. The seeing player - if old enough - leads the blindfolded player to a special tree, one that has intriguing characteristics. Upon meeting the tree, the blindfolded player feels the texture of the tree's bark, sees how big the tree is by putting his arms around it, and explores the tree's branches and leaves. After getting to know their trees, the blindfolded players are brought back to the starting point, where their blindfolds are removed, and they try to find their tree.



*"Camouflage Trail"* - Find a trail going through an area where you can see the ground and where there isn't a lot of tall grass or shrubs. A forest with both small and large trees, leaf litter, rotting logs, and some plants is ideal. Choose a 65- to 100-foot section of the trail making sure that it is wide enough for two people to pass. Along the trail place 16 to 24 man-made objects - some should stand out, like brightly colored balloons. Others should blend with their surroundings, and be more difficult to pick out. Keep the number of objects you've planted secret.

Children walk the section of trail one at a time, trying to spot (but not pick up) as many of the objects as they can. When they reach the end of the trail, they whisper in your ear how many they saw. Encourage the children to walk the trail again, looking for any objects they've missed. For older children, have some objects that are placed in plain view, but are still difficult to find. To allow everyone to see where the objects were hidden, go to the beginning of the trail, and have the players point out objects as you walk by each one. As you pick up objects, have a player collect them, and count the number of objects found. End the game with a discussion of the ways camouflage coloration helps animals. Then go on a search for small camouflaged animals (insects, spiders, etc.).



**Continued on page 7**





## Spring Garden Ideas & Activities



Yes, spring is a special time for everyone, but for the observant gardener, this time of year is magic. There's nothing quite like seeing new growth appear on trees, witnessing the beautiful process of bud to bloom, and finally getting your hands in the soil to plant everything you've been dreaming about all winter.

### Create a Spot to Enjoy your Garden

Lots of hard work goes into maintaining a garden, so be sure to take some time to appreciate the fruits of your labor. Creating a designated spot to soak up the beauty that surrounds you can be as involved as building a wall to create a small space that's separated from the rest of your garden, or as simple as placing a few comfortable chairs in front of a water feature or fire pit. Whichever type of retreat you decide to create, make sure it's comfy. For maximum enjoyment, we recommend making it a smartphone-free zone!



### Perform Maintenance

It's no secret that being outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine is good for mental health, and working in the garden is good for physical health (in our opinion, it's the most enjoyable form of exercise!). This all works out well, because it's time to get your hands dirty in the garden! You didn't think spring was all about inspiration and relaxing in the garden, did you? It's time to get out there and take care of the plants currently in your garden and prepare for the upcoming season by pruning, dividing perennials, fertilizing, and prepping garden beds.



### Plan for Summer Color

Generally, seeds of most annuals should be started indoors about 6 weeks before your last frost date. (Find your location's estimated last frost date.) If you missed the window of time for starting seeds indoors, fear not! There are plenty of hardy annuals such as zinnias, sunflowers, and marigolds that can or should be planted directly in the ground after any possibility of frost has passed.



### Think Vertically

When it comes to the garden, designer Susan Morrison reminds us to "make the most of the entire space,". "That includes walls, transitions, and what's overhead. Going vertical adds a unique touch to gardens of any size." Gardeners are often daunted by the thought of vines because they have a reputation for being messy and growing out of control, but with proper care and attention, flowering vines can be a beautiful addition to your garden without causing grief.

### Add a Garden Gate

A garden gate makes such a wonderful addition to any outdoor space, adding a decorative element of intrigue. Take a walk through your yard to make note of any spots where you can possibly add a garden gate. You can use a garden gate to create a partition between two areas of your garden (e.g., between your vegetable garden and the rest of your yard). Or maybe there's a small corner of your garden dedicated to relaxation - a garden gate would be a lovely way to create a moment of pause before entering that space. If you already have a garden gate that you'd like to modify, think about ways to improve its aesthetic. For example, a new paint job, a material refresh, or even just fixing a fickle hinge can work wonders in adding to the enjoyment of your garden.



### Just Add Water

Listening to the soothing sounds of water is as mesmerizing to the ears as watching fire is mesmerizing to the eyes. Adding a fountain or water feature to your garden is a wonderful way to create a soothing vibe.

### Appease the Belly

When it comes to deciding what to grow, we recommend visiting your local farmers' market.

Look at the size and quality of the produce to get an idea of what grows well in your area. You can even talk to the farmers about what they have success with. If there are two types of broccoli, ask what the difference is. Do they notice a big difference in growing them? If there's something delicious and beautiful that you're interested in planting, ask how difficult it is to grow. These people are gardening experts, and they have local knowledge.



### Add a Personal Touch

"I built it myself!" is arguably one of the most gratifying phrases to utter. There's nothing quite like receiving a compliment from a friend or family member about something you've created yourself. Why not set aside a weekend this spring to work on that outdoor DIY project you've had on your to-do list?



Article information from:

[https://www.gardendesign.com/spring/2019-ideas.html?utm\\_source=article-newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Spring-Ideas-ICYMI-4-23-20](https://www.gardendesign.com/spring/2019-ideas.html?utm_source=article-newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Spring-Ideas-ICYMI-4-23-20)

## Northwoods Journal Online

Would you like to read current issues of the *Northwoods Journal* online? Go to [www.marinettecounty.com](http://www.marinettecounty.com) and search for "Northwoods Journal". We can also send you an e-mail reminder when each new issue is posted online. Contact Anne Bartels, Information & Education Specialist at 715-732-7784 or email [abartels@marinettecounty.com](mailto:abartels@marinettecounty.com).





## Nature Activities to Help Get Your Family Through the Coronavirus Pandemic

[https://www.childrenandnature.org/2020/03/16/10-nature-activities-to-help-get-your-family-through-the-pandemic/?mc\\_cid=5fdff6bdf8&mc\\_eid=16b298bbda](https://www.childrenandnature.org/2020/03/16/10-nature-activities-to-help-get-your-family-through-the-pandemic/?mc_cid=5fdff6bdf8&mc_eid=16b298bbda)



Getting outside - but at a safe distance from other people - can be one way to boost your family's resilience. If you spend too much time indoors, "your vitamin D level goes down," advises John de Pluma, MD, a board-certified internist and proponent of food-based health practices and nature therapy. De Pluma points to research suggesting an association between visiting forests and improving immune responses. An increasing body of scientific evidence does associate "Vitamin N" (for 'Nature') with reduced stress, better mental and physical health and greater cognitive functioning. Connecting with animals (wild and domestic) may also offset the downside of social distancing. So, here's a sampling of activities (borrowed from Richard Louv's *Vitamin N, Our Wild Calling*, *Last Child in the Woods* and other sources) to help your family make the best of a tough situation.

**Pick a "sit spot."** Find a special place in nature, whether it's under a tree at the end of the yard, a hidden bend of a creek, or a rooftop garden. Get to know the natural aspects of the spot - flora, fauna, weather, etc. Doing so can reduce our sense of isolation - our species loneliness. In addition, building a fort, den, or tree house can help children with problem-solving, creativity, planning and a sense of security and place.



Can't go outside today? **Set up a world-watching window.** Bring the outside in. Many of us don't have the option of hiking or spending time in the backyard. Air and light pollution prevent two-thirds of the U.S. population and more than half of Europe's population from seeing the Milky Way with the naked eye. But if your family is lucky enough to live where the stars are visible, stargaze in the evening or very early morning. With your kids, locate a few key constellations and orient to those. Other world-watch window activities can include cloud spotting, bird-watching, and more. Keep a nature notebook, field guides for birds and stars, binoculars, a telescope, a digital camera with a telephoto lens, and maybe even a sound recorder to capture the sounds of the natural world.

Other ways to bring the outside in: Indoor plants, as many as possible, will help - especially native species. No plants? Send for seeds, especially for native plants if you can find them, and make an indoor garden in your apartment or house. Also, keep learning about nature - study botany, native insects, ecological relationships, habitat, etc.



### Take a hike or do other exercises outdoors.

Where you walk or hike will depend on the degree of social distancing your particular situation requires. With safety issues in mind, both safety from the virus and from people, pick a time a time for your outdoor walk or hike when fewer people are in the park (if the park is still open) or on the street. Games can help. For example, "Walk this Way" - imitating different animals along the way. Bring toys and props that will make it more fun, like hats and fake swords. Walkie-talkies are also a big hit. Encourage kids to take turns as "hike leader," walking in front and setting the pace. To help kids pay attention during longer hikes, play 'find ten critters', discovering footprints or other signs of an animal passing through.



### Go backyard, rooftop or deck camping.

Buy or borrow a tent or encourage your kids to create their own tepee from a blanket, poles, or sticks. Leave it up all summer. Make s'mores, play flashlight tag, and make shadow puppets on the tent wall. Encourage them to run into the house for provisions from the refrigerator, and back out again. To turn the tent into a homemade observation blind, cut a small window in the side that faces a nearby bird feeder, bat house, or a place frequented by wildlife. Stow binoculars, field guides, a digital camera with a telephoto lens, water, and granola bars. Join the National Wildlife Federation's annual Great American Backyard Campout. No yard? Before air-conditioning, pitching a hammock, dragging a mattress, or spreading a sleeping bag on a flat roof or fire escape was common.

### Got dirt? Set aside a piece of ground in the backyard for kids to dig in.

Research suggests that children strengthen their immune systems by playing in the dirt - and weaken those systems by avoiding dirt. A dirt pile cost less than a video game and lasts far longer.

### Find nature everywhere - and create more of it.

National Geographic offers an online guide, *Finding Urban Nature*, that can help city dwellers. If you have a yard, check out the National Wildlife Federation's guide to building a backyard wildlife habitat: "You can invite wildlife back to your own yard and neighborhood by planting a simple garden that provides habitat. Imagine your garden teeming with singing songbirds, colorful butterflies, flitting hummingbirds, and other small wildlife."

Plant a pollinator garden to help restore biodiversity where you live. Make a mini-pond. Using little more than a tub, sand, a few rocks, and some water, Wildlife Watch UK shows how to make an oasis for aquatic and amphibious backyard creatures: [www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-create-mini-pond](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-create-mini-pond). Observe the critters that come to visit your new habitat and keep a journal.



**Plant a family or friendship tree, or adopt one.** Nurturing nature is a positive action to take wherever you live, densely populated urban neighborhood, suburb or small town. Adopt or plant a tree to help mark important family occasions - a holiday, a birth, death, or marriage. The Arbor Day Foundation has information about tree-planting opportunities.



If you want to hear the  
Sound of the bird, don't  
buy a cage.

**PLANT A TREE.**

HUMANITY

Susan J. Tweit, plant biologist and author of *Walking Nature Home*, offers this suggestion: "Get to know a tree or shrub in your neighborhood intimately by observing it over the course of a growing season. Every week, check your adopted tree or shrub and note any changes."

Take pictures of your live family tree in its first snow or after a big windstorm. Make bark rubbings using crayons and paper. Make a digital adoption notebook with photos, videos, and observations. Plant its seeds. Visit *Project Budburst* (<https://budburst.org/>) or *Nature's Notebook* ([www.usanpn.org/natures\\_notebook](http://www.usanpn.org/natures_notebook)), and set up an account for your adopted tree or shrub. Acts of caring for others and nurturing nature build psychological and spiritual resilience at a time when children and adults most need it.

### Be an electronic wildlife watcher.

The internet offers many opportunities to view live nature cams. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology invites the public to join the Celebrate Urban Birds project, which provides links to birdcams and kits in Spanish and English. Project participants in are encouraged to garden, create nature-related art, and observe neighborhood birds, then send the data online to scientists at the Cornell Lab. The project focuses on species of birds often found in urban neighborhoods. Also from Cornell Lab, [www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/), provides educational resources and Feeder Watch helps them protect species by contributing a seasonal tally. At <https://ebird.org/home>, you can post bird sightings, track bird populations in your own neighborhood, and keep a bird list.



Locally, another project is *Snapshot Wisconsin*, <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/research/projects/snapshot/>, a volunteer-based project which utilizes a statewide network of trail cameras to monitor wildlife year-round. Volunteers host trail cameras throughout Wisconsin's landscapes, and photos of wildlife captured on the cameras are hosted online, where they can be classified by volunteers across the globe. The resulting dataset is used to inform WDNR management decisions, and help us learn more about Wisconsin's wildlife.

**Continued next page**



## Go on a Bug Hunt!

<https://www.arboretum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BUG-HUNT-2.pdf>

Spring is here, which means our mighty pollinators are out in full force! Now is a great time to talk to your kids about the importance of these amazing creatures we are traditionally taught to fear. Going on a “Bug Hunt” is a great way to get started.



You can do a Bug Hunt everywhere - from natural environments to urban areas. Bugs (and evidence of bugs) are everywhere - you just have to take a closer look. Tell your kids they are about to become ‘Nature Detectives’, and the suspects they are investigating are bugs. If you have the supplies, have them create their own detective badges. Have them fashion their own detective outfits (perhaps one of dad’s tweed jackets, or one of mom’s fashionable hats?). Once everyone is outfitted properly, pack your detective case! Things to include: Notebooks or paper, pencils, rulers or tape measures, magnifying glasses, cameras, cell phones or ipads, and if you have field journals to help you identify what you find, throw those in too!

Next: Set your mission! Tell your kids they are being tasked with finding as many bugs as possible. Explain that nature provides us with clues that will lead us to those bugs. For example, where there are flowers, there are bugs! Where there is soil, there are bugs! Where there are rocks, leaves, wood, grass, trees.... there are bugs! Even something as simple as a crack in the sidewalk of a densely-concrete area is an effective place to find your suspects.



If they don’t find any physical bugs, they may be able to find “evidence” of bugs - tiny tracks in dirt, a slug’s shimmering trail on pavement, chew holes in a leaf, or even tiny bug eggs laid on the underside of that leaf. Simply lying down on the grass and looking deep into its forest of blades, or flipping over and gazing up can yield amazing discoveries.



A Bug Hunt can be a fun, physical activity or a peaceful exercise in mindfulness. For the latter, consider having your children spend some time really studying what they see, and journaling

their observations with notes, drawings, etc. You can take photos with your camera, or take a time-lapsed video of a bug at work, then head home and do a google search about the bugs you found, and write about your data.



You can also use your photos to zoom in and take a much closer look at your bugs! You can see how many winged bugs you can find, how many different colors of bugs you can find, who can find the smallest bug, who can find the largest. Observe what they are doing, and hypothesize why. Why is that bee drawn to that flower? Are there any commonalities between the plants the different butterflies are attracted to, such as their colors or their shapes? Is the ant you see alone, or in a group? Are they working together or independently, and what are they doing?



For each bug you find, kids can scribble down details about it, including what it looks like, how many legs or wings it has, where it’s found, what it’s doing, and what they think it eats.

Many children develop irrational fears of bugs at a young age, or are taught that bugs are gross. A Bug Hunt helps children to not only deprogram those feelings, but also to gain an understanding of and appreciation for our pollinating and other bug friends in a fun, competitive way that gets them outdoors and engaging in physical activity. It aims to instill curiosity and fascination by showing them that a wide variety of insects are harmless, can be found almost anywhere, and are necessary for life to thrive.



As with any outdoor activity, remember a few safety tips. This is a great time to talk about empathy for other living creatures, and respecting their lifestyles. Make sure they know to keep a safe distance, and to be mindful of plants they may touch, rocks they may turn over, leaves they may dig through, and the life they are living. Remind them to be gentle of all living things on their adventure, so as to not disturb the evidence! When you have completed your mission, take some time to discuss the experience, and reflect on the many lessons learned.

Bug identification & information websites:

- <https://bugguide.net>
- [www.insectidentification.org](http://www.insectidentification.org)
- <https://www.xerces.org/>

## Nature Activities, continued



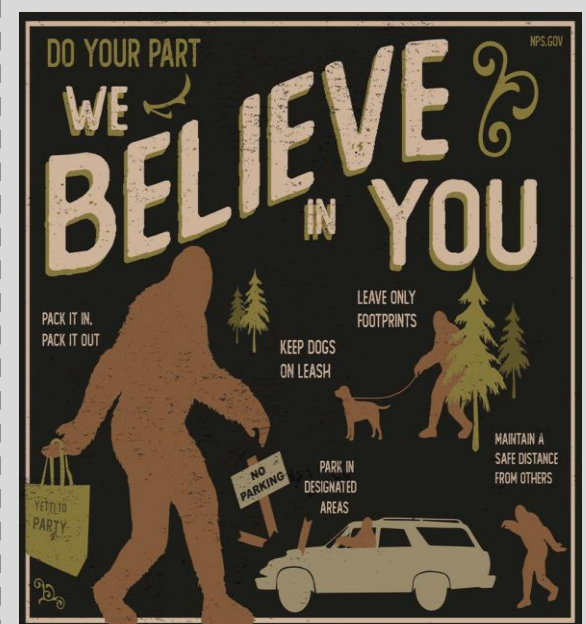
**Give a book that will inspire an outdoor adventure.** Most of us can recall our favorite childhood books: picture books for toddlers and books for elementary-age and young adults. As gift books, the ones that parents and other family members loved when they were children will have special meaning for kids. The books most likely to inspire children to head outdoors aren’t environmental sermons (plenty of time for those later), but about adventure and wonder. You can read these books together as a family.

Encourage your kids to start their own nature journals. Can’t get outside? Suggest that they write and draw the birds they see in the window, and the nature adventures they’d like to have this summer or next fall.



- <https://theartofsimple.net/nature-journaling-with-kids/>
- <https://nurturestore.co.uk/the-ultimate-guide-to-nature-journals-for-children>
- <https://rhythmsofplay.com/get-outside-connect-create-nature-journal-notebook/>

## This is a good reminder to residents visiting the County Parks!



- ♣ Pack it in - Pack it out
- ♣ Leave nothing but footprints
- ♣ Keep dogs on a 6-foot leash
- ♣ Park in only designated areas
- ♣ Maintain "Social Distancing":

Make it pleasant experience so everyone can enjoy our parks.

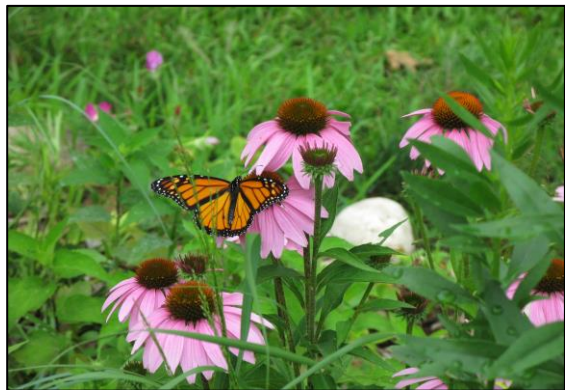




### Introducing the P.I.G. Project - Pollinator Invitation Gardens for Marinette County



This spring, the Pollinator Invitation Gardens (“P.I.G.”) Project is coming to Marinette County! This is an initiative to help increase pollinator habitat throughout Marinette County by installing small ‘pocket’ pollinator gardens on private and public property. Pollinators include insects such as native bees, butterflies/moths, beetles, flies, some wasps; hummingbirds; and some bat species. Pollinators worldwide are being harmed by habitat loss, climate issues, human use of pesticides/chemicals, land use practices, and more. Without pollinators many plant species can’t produce seeds, nuts & fruits that people & wildlife need as food sources.



Monarch butterfly nectaring on Purple Coneflower

This project will also provide educational opportunities for residents by connecting them with nature in their own backyards or places of business. There are various opportunities for citizen science observations/projects and continuous learning about native plant habitats year-round and the organisms that depend on them.



Above - pollinator garden at Wausaukee School in August 2019, installed in June 2019, with native plants like Coneflower, Wild Lupine, Coreopsis, and Wild Geranium. Below, the garden in late April 2020, with plants starting to emerge.



In addition, this project will promote mental & physical wellness through gardening and getting people outside into nature. People will better appreciate and understand ecological relation-

(ships, as well as learn more about the importance of habitat.



New England Aster, a late summer/early fall bloomer

The P.I.G. project is for homeowners, businesses, organizations, municipalities, churches, schools, care facilities, etc. in Marinette County. Land & Water Conservation staff will help participants establish a small pocket garden of native perennial plants, provide resources and information necessary to maintain it, and help provide any follow-up assistance until the garden is established.



Bumblebee on New England Aster

This year there will be no cost for resources, labor or materials to the participants for P.I.G. installations. Garden installations will be handled in a first come – first served basis and will last as long as funding is available. For questions or to participate in the P.I.G. project, please contact Anne Bartels, Information & Education Specialist, at the Marinette County Land Information Department - Land & Water Conservation Division - at 715-732-7784 or [abartels@marinettecounty.com](mailto:abartels@marinettecounty.com).



Above: bumblebee on Butterflyweed; below, tiger swallowtail butterfly on Yarrow



**\* UPDATE – as of 5/18, there are 36 P.I.G. Participants! \***

### Other Visitors to a Pollinator Garden

You may have other critters visit your pollinator garden, many of whom can help control pest insect populations and reduce the need for pesticides and herbicides. Here are a few critters you may notice in your pollinator garden that are less visible but helpful just the same!



Blue-spotted Salamanders eat invertebrates in the soil like worms, spiders, insects, and slugs.



A female Pelecinid wasp – that long thin section is just the abdomen; it doesn’t contain a stinger. She uses it to deposit eggs onto June beetle grubs in the soil. When the eggs hatch the young burrow into and eat the grub. Adults are pollinators, feeding on nectar.



Dragonflies eat a variety of flying yard & garden pests, including beetles, flies, and mosquitoes.



This goldenrod crab spider caught a bee. It’s an ambush predator that waits for prey atop a flower – it eats bees, flies, wasps, beetles, butterflies, and even other spiders! It changes color to blend in with certain flowers.



Spring peepers, like the salamander and many other amphibians, eat a variety of invertebrate prey and may ‘hang out’ in plants or on structures (especially near porch lights) to catch nocturnal flying insects.





## Make a Fairy – or Dinosaur – or Wildlife – or Lego – Mini-Garden!

<https://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/975981/create-a-garden-for-your-kids-imagination/>

Whether your kids are into ballerinas or superheroes, you can create a fun succulent garden for imaginative play. Teach your kids about plant care while working together to build a miniature landscape.



With kids so plugged in these days, it can be a struggle to get them outdoors. Try introducing kids to nature on a very small scale by creating a dinosaur or fairy garden. Perfect for a large planter near a window or a special place in your vegetable garden, these fun projects will inspire little imaginations.



### Start with the basics

The idea behind a fairy garden is to create a miniature landscape for imaginative play. Before you begin putting the garden together, you need to decide where you're going to set it up. If your winter seasons are harsh, you may want to use a large planter inside. However, this can be messy. If your seasons are mild, try creating the garden outside. A large planter, such as a tin trough, is a good bet if you have toddlers who can belly up to it for playtime. You can also use an area of your existing landscaping or garden. Just separate the play garden from the rest of the yard with small landscaping dividers or bricks.

Depending on your child's interests, the miniature landscape you create can be populated with all sorts of toys and knick-knacks. Traditionally, fairy gardens were created to resemble little huts and villages where invisible fairies lived "in the wild." Not every child is fascinated with magic and fairies. Let your kids guide you. Dinosaur gardens for plastic toys are a common alternative, but you can also create a jungle landscape for action figures or small animal toys. Get your kids involved as you choose the props. Anything from a dollhouse table to smooth river stones can be used as tiny props in your play garden.



### Choose small and hardy plants

A dinosaur or fairy garden is a miniature landscape. With this in mind, choose plants that resemble larger plants. For example, a tiny succulent may resemble a large tree. Avoid plants that require a lot of maintenance and care. You should also avoid plants that break easily and plants with sharp thorns or spikes. Aeoniums come in a huge variety of shades and can generally be found for under \$5 at your local garden center. If your climate is nice and sunny, try varieties of miniature palms or snake plants. If you're not familiar with succulents, visit your local nursery and talk to the staff about your garden plans. They will direct you to child-friendly varieties and you can get a feel for the textures and consistencies of the plants.



### Build the garden together

This is the fun part. When you've gathered your container, soil, plants and props, it's time to construct your miniature world. Try covering old bowls to make little hills on the landscape. Stack rocks and make stepping stone paths with smooth, flat stones. Ask your kids to gather twigs to make fences and "fire pits" in the garden. Decorate with tiny cloth remnant banners or small wind chimes. Keep it very simple if your kids plan on staging some dinosaur battles or off-road car races on the terrain.



You can even bring the gardens inside by creating a fun terrarium (like this one featuring *Star Wars* Ewoks below).



You can keep busy for hours designing and creating beautiful – and fun – fairy gardens with various themes. Experiment with different kinds of plants and props in your gardens, and have the family help plan and assemble the gardens. Everyone can get involved, be creative and enjoy a little bit of nature all at the same time.



Here are links to more miniature garden ideas and tips on how to create them.

- <https://neverdonewithfun.com/2019/05/28/dinosaur-miniature-container-garden/>
- <http://www.tinygreengardens.com/dinosaur-garden/>
- <https://brainpowerboy.com/fairy-gardens-for-boys/>
- <https://innerchildfun.com/2013/06/lets-build-a-fairy-garden-table.html>
- <https://www.toddlerapproved.com/2015/05/easy-lego-fairy-garden-for-kids.html>
- <https://www.countryliving.com/gardening/garden-ideas/g3417/fairy-garden-ideas/>
- [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com) – lots of ideas for fairy/dinosaur/wildlife/fantasy/Lego mini-gardens and more

### From page 2, 'Get Outside', continued



### Other resources for activities & ideas

- <https://www.fs.usda.gov/learn/kids>
- <https://www.thewildnetwork.com/wild-time-ideas>
- <https://www.wildlabs.is/>
- <https://www.wisconservation.org/earth-day-50-celebration/>
- <https://1000hoursoutside.com/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/getthekidsoutside/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/forestandnature/schools/>
- <https://www.natureplaywa.org.au/25-things-to-do-in-social-isolation>
- <https://www.botanicgardens.org/sites/default/files/blog-photos/springactivity.pdf>
- <https://littlepinelearners.com>





## Make a birdbath

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com>

You've probably noticed birds using fountains in the park to take a bath. Why not make a birdbath of your own to invite the birds to your yard? Then watch as they come by to splish, splash, and take a bath!



### You will need:

- 3 terra-cotta planters of various sizes
- 1 flower pot saucer that is a few inches larger in circumference than the smallest flower pot
- Acrylic paint
- Heavy-duty outdoor glue

### Step one:

Gather up some terra-cotta pots and saucers. Try turning one upside down and then stack one right side up on top of it. Then place a large saucer on top of the highest pot, or turn three different-size pots upside down and stack them in descending order. Then place a large saucer on top.

### Step two:

Once you have decided on a shape for your birdbath, it's time to start painting! Spray paint or any other outdoor paint will work. Ask an adult for help. Choose a variety of colors. Try using a small paintbrush to add some designs to make your birdbath unique!



### Step three:

Once the pots and saucers are dry, have an adult use outdoor permanent glue to attach the pieces and form the design you choose.

### Step four:

Once the glue is dry, fill up your birdbath with water! Remember the water in the shallow saucer will evaporate quickly. Keep it filled so the birds can swoop in to freshen up!



Here are more birdbath ideas!



<https://www.diyncrafts.com/36548/home/20-adorably-easy-diy-bird-baths-youll-want-to-add-to-your-garden-today>



<https://mamabee.com/11-brilliant-diy-bird-baths/>



<https://blog.gardenloversclub.com/diy/flower-pot-bird-baths/>



<https://www.kellyelko.com/stepladder-birdbath-unusual-ladder/>



## DIY Painted Garden Markers

<https://beauty.provenwinners.com/diy/kids-projects/kids-painted-rocks/>



Looking for a fun way to involve the kids in your gardening activities? Here's a project you can do together that lets the little ones leave their mark on this year's vegetable garden. Just take two parts adventure and mix it with one part art project and you have a lot more than colorful stone garden markers. You have proud artists and budding gardeners who have a "stake" in this year's garden.

### Part One: Adventure

First, gather the stones. Depending on where you live, you may be able to find these on a nature walk, along a beach, or on a hiking trail. If your time is limited or you don't have easy access to a natural area, you could visit a garden center to purchase small, flat landscape stones suitable for painting. Second, spend time with the children talking about what types of vegetables you want to plant this year and let them help you shop for seeds.

### Part Two: Art Project

All you need are rocks, a selection of acrylic paints, small artist paint brushes, and some creativity. For smaller hands, a variety of colored permanent markers could do the trick as well.



Each rock can identify a specific vegetable in words, a drawing, or both. It is also a good idea to coat the rocks with a non-toxic all-purpose sealer when the paint is dry for extra weather resistance.

As the plants start to sprout, the adventure continues by allowing you to teach the children the tasks of watering, weeding, and harvesting the garden.





## Using Tech to Learn in Nature

<https://www.fatherly.com/gear/7-apps-that-will-convince-your-kid-you-know-everything-about-the-natural-world/>

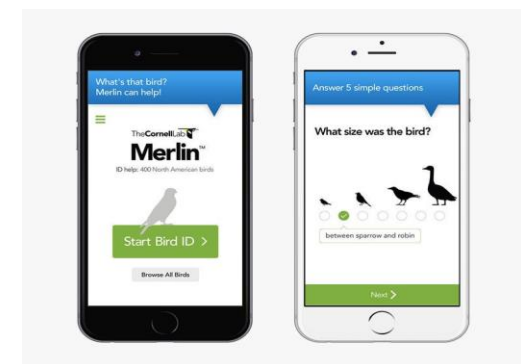


Just because you can't tell a Tufted Titmouse from a Coast Pignut Hickory doesn't mean your kid has to know you're not a walking Natural History Museum. With these nature apps for smartphones and tablets, you can wander outdoors, day or night, and answer practically any question they have, from "What is that bright star on the horizon?" to "Is this bug that I'm putting in my mouth poisonous?" The window of time during which your kid thinks you know everything is vanishingly thin, so leverage technology to make it last as long as possible. Because, someday soon, they'll be all grown up and able to Google things for themselves.

These plant, animal and star identifying apps let you identify pieces of the world around you through your phone's camera feature or by asking you questions. They turn screen time into an opportunity to get out into nature and learn, giving your kid the gift of having a world of information at their fingertips. Some are free and some involve a fee.

### Bird Apps

**Merlin Bird ID** - Merlin asks you 4 simple questions about any bird you happen upon and delivers a small selection of potential species. Assuming you can see and/or hear it, you can quickly identify whatever it was that just pooped on you. Merlin cross-references your answers with a massive database of bird sightings that's maintained by thousands of hardcore bird geeks, and only suggest species known to have been seen recently near your location. However, while suggested species will include samples of their song, the nature app can't identify a bird based on its song, which some less-free apps can (free – iOS, Android).



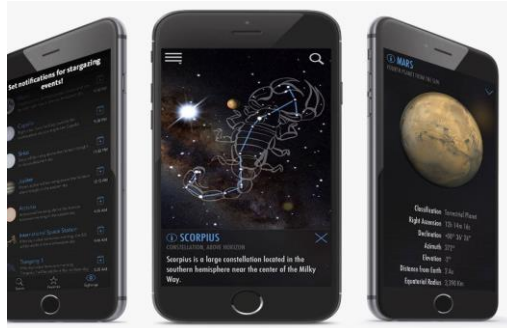
Other available apps include E-bird, Audubon Birds, iBird Pro, National Geographic Birds, Peterson Birds, and Sibley eGuide to Birds and BirdsEye.



### Stars and Planets Apps

**Skyview** - Point your phone's camera at the night sky and SkyView will determine your location via GPS and identify all the planets, constellations, stars and satellites that are currently visible.

A robust search function that helps you find things like the International Space Station, the Hubble telescope, or the Big Dipper (which, really, you should already know how to find). It also has daily updates that point out when new things have become visible. SkyView is one of the top-rated nature apps of all time in the App Store. There are some grumblings on Google Play about compatibility issues with certain phones, but it still has a 4+ rating on over 4,000 reviews (\$1.99 – iOS, Android).

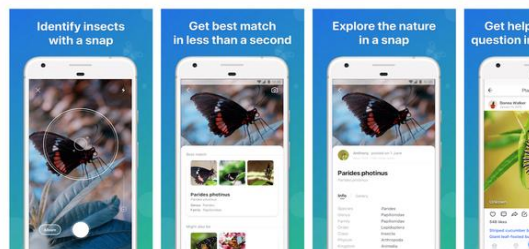


Other astronomy apps include NASA, StarWalk, Star Chart, SkySafari, Solar Walk, Sky Map, Go Skywatch, Stellarium, and Pocket Universe.

### Bugs and Butterflies

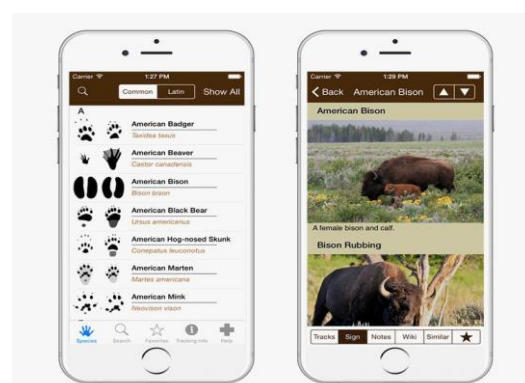
**Audubon Butterflies, Insects and Spiders** - Basically just an app version of the Audubon Society's world-class field guides, these apps include in-depth information on literally every single butterfly or bug you could possibly encounter in North America. Spectacular photo galleries for every single species and robust search that lets you enter things like size, shape, and color to help identify things when you don't know the name. (Insects and Spiders: \$4.99 iOS, \$3.99 Android; Butterflies: \$4.99 iOS, \$3.99 Android).

**Picture Insect** – Just take a photo of the insect you wish to identify and Picture Insect will use artificial intelligence to try and match it with one of the over 1,000 species they have cataloged. Users can share photos with each other for second opinions on what type of insect is pictured. However, there are in-app purchases available, so keep this one away from curious little fingers (free – iOS, Android).



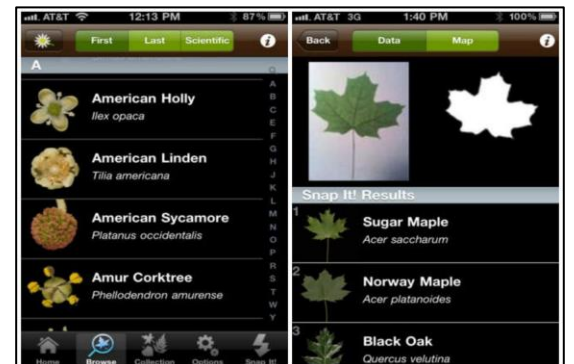
### Animal Track Apps

**iTrack Wildlife Pro** - Another app version of an old school field guide, iTrack Wildlife lets you search a database of 69 North American mammals based on some basic information about their foot, paw, or claw prints. The app will not only help you identify animals based on their prints, but also on their skulls. However, tiered pricing means you can access a handful of species with the free "Lite" version and a handful more with the "Basic" version. The whole package is pretty spendy for an app (\$14.99 iOS, Android).



### Trees Apps

**Leafsnap** – Leafsnap uses software similar to facial recognition to scan a photo of leaf that you take with your phone and compare it with a database with hundreds of different tree species. The resulting match includes everything you could ever want to know about that tree. Leafsnap will help you see (and name) the trees from the forest. It currently works best in the Northeastern U.S. and Canada, as well as the U.K. Also, it's iOS only, although the Audubon Society has a less robust tree app for Android (Free iOS).

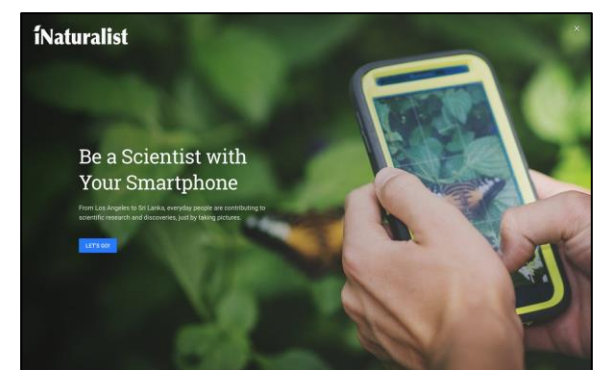


### National Wildlife Federation Nature Guides

Want to identify the butterflies that visit your garden, learn which birds make which call, create a list of trees that grow naturally in your area, or research which animals you might see on your next hike? The National Wildlife Federation Nature Guides will help you discover the wild animals, plants, and mushrooms of North America with 50,000 pages of expert-curated content, thousands of the highest quality professional photographs and illustrations, up-to-date range maps, and more than 4,000 bird, mammal, insect, and amphibian sounds. Identifying species, learning about the wildlife, and connecting with nature has never been easier. Get all the apps and carry one of the richest field guide series in your pocket, with 24/7 access at your fingertips wherever you go! (\$9.99 each, [www.nwf.org/natureguides](http://www.nwf.org/natureguides)).

### I-Naturalist

Explore and share your observations from the natural world! This is a citizen science project where every observation can contribute to biodiversity science, from the rarest butterfly to the most common backyard weed. Share your findings with scientific data repositories like the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to help scientists find and use your data. All you have to do is observe and report. (free, <https://www.inaturalist.org/>).



### More citizen science project opportunities:

- <http://wiatri.net/> - Wisconsin Aquatic & Terrestrial Resources Inventory – various projects – bees, bats, amphibians, etc.
- <https://monarchjointventure.org/mlmp> - monarch larva monitoring project
- [https://www.usanpn.org/natures\\_notebook](https://www.usanpn.org/natures_notebook) - National Phenology Network
- [www.bumblebeewatch.org](http://www.bumblebeewatch.org)
- [www.citizenscience.gov/](http://www.citizenscience.gov/)
- <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/g26089673/best-stargazing-apps/>







Interested in tracking migrations, signs of spring, and learning about citizen science? Read about Journey North!  
<https://journeynorth.org>

In its 26th year, **Journey North** is one of North America's premiere citizen science programs for people of all ages. The project has broad participation, with over 60,000 registered sites in the US, Canada, and Mexico - including families, teachers, schools, nature centers, professional scientists and novices. Journey North provides an easy entry point to citizen science, with simple protocols, strong online support, and immediate results.

Reported sightings are mapped in real-time as waves of migrations move across the continent. People report sightings from the field, view maps, take pictures, and leave comments. Example of a milkweed sighting entry and photo from an observer:



*Date: 05/05/2020, Wallace, MI – "Butterfly weed coming up - this is the earliest I've seen it in my area. It's usually the last species of milkweed to appear in my area, normally mid-to late June."*

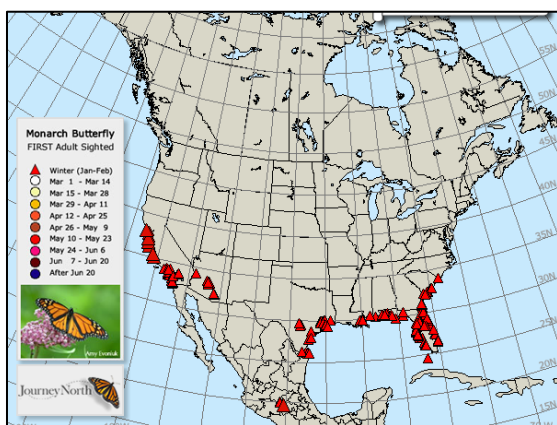
Some topics of migration on Journey North include hummingbirds, eagles, orioles, whooping cranes, barn swallows, loons, monarch butterflies, and whales. Other topics include ice-out, the appearance of frogs and earthworms, the appearance of plants like milkweed, and leaf-out in spring.



Journey North was founded in 1994 by Elizabeth Howard who led the project for 25 years. Throughout its history, Journey North has been funded by Annenberg Learner, a division of the Annenberg Foundation, focused on advancing excellent teaching in American schools. In early 2019, after 25 years, the Journey North program moved to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum. This move represents an exciting crossroads for one of the largest citizen science programs in North America.

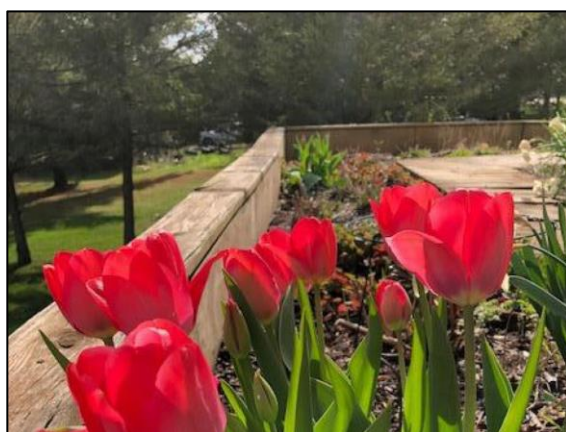


Journey North includes resources for educators. 'News Updates' include journal pages with a question to explore, an activity to try, a map to analyze and more. Over the season, the journal becomes a workplace where students explore ever-changing events, record compelling questions, formulate hypotheses, and document discoveries. There are also educator planning tools to help with vocabulary, reading and inquiry strategies, and more.



### Phenology: The Seasonal Timing of Life Cycle Events

*Phenology* is the study of the seasonal timing of life cycle events. You are studying phenology when you record the date a certain plant grows, a tree's leaves emerge, an insect hatches, or a migratory bird appears on its nesting grounds. The dates on which these happen each year are affected by factors such as daylength, temperature, and rainfall. All of the projects on Journey North involve phenology.



### Track Seasonal Change

Observe the natural world closely. Record data, take photos, and make drawings. Look for patterns of seasonal change, and note webs of connections. By studying the timing of seasonal changes, students think like scientists who look for clues about how climate and other factors affect living things.

### Share Your Observations

The observations you contribute to Journey North become part of a permanent database. Scientists use Journey North data to monitor how living things respond to changes in climate. Visit the Journey North website today, submit your observations, and share your data - it's interesting and educational for people of all ages!



Engaging the rock-skipping, frog-catching spirit that lives inside of each of us is at the heart of what we do at the Wisconsin Green Schools Network, and we offer **Environmental Education for Kids (EEK!)** as student-friendly content that teachers need as a catalyst to connect, explore, and engage in learning outside.



EEK is designed for upper-elementary and middle school students to learn about our state's natural resources. Content is contributed by many partners from our environmental education community and has more than 900 pages to learn about Wisconsin. If you would like to contribute content or have suggestions for content that could be included on EEK, please contact us!

Originally created by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Wisconsin Green Schools Network is proud to relaunch EEK with a new, updated, and more playful design. The site receives more than 400,000 visits annually from all over the world.



Connect with activities that focus on quieting the mind. Get up and active while you explore the world outside your window. Engage in shared learning, taking action, or finding out more about topics that you are passionate about. Check back often as new posts will be added weekly!



EEK! Includes many resources for educators, parents, youth leaders, and others who would like ideas for engaging youth in nature. Find outdoor safety tips, activity & craft ideas, nature identification and observation tips, DIY projects, experiments, quizzes and puzzles, and more on EEK! to help connect, explore, and engage in Wisconsin's outdoors.

